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COMMONSENSE ABOUT INDIA

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COMMONSENSE ABOUT INDIA

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I THE INDIAN CRISIS	1
II THE AVERAGE MAN'S VIEW	6
III THE INDIAN'S VIEW	13
IV BRITISH IMPERIAL INDIA	20
V COMMUNAL DIFFERENCES IN INDIA	28
VI INDIA AND THE WAR	38
VII THE CRIPPS MISSION	50
VIII A COMMONSENSE SOLUTION	60
IX WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?	64
APPENDIX	68

I

THE INDIAN CRISIS

At the end of our third year of war a situation has arisen in India which has caused conflict and bitterness in that country, bewilderment and disgust with India at home, and undisguised delight among the Nazis and Japanese. The Axis delight is justified. The deadlock with India bids fair to be as great a triumph for our enemies as it would be for the United Nations if violent internal conflict broke out in the Japanese Empire, with every likelihood of a great part of it making a separate peace with America and retiring from the war.

The Axis powers see the situation in India as a heaven-sent prelude to a simplified Japanese conquest, helped by the apathy or even embittered co-operation of the Indian people, with British arms defeated as swiftly as they were in Hong-kong, Malaya, Singapore, Java and Borneo—where much the same conditions prevailed, though in a less promising degree.

The energy of Axis propaganda pouring into the ears of India at this moment makes no secret of the eagerness with which the enemy is waiting for the plum to drop. With India successfully invaded, the British Empire's richest potential source of men and materials would be in Japanese hands, our route of supply to China would be cut off, the Red Army could be attacked and Russia penetrated from a new vantage point, the Indian Ocean would become an Axis highway, and Australia would be effectively isolated for Japan to attend to at her leisure. What could our enemies want more?

It is a situation so dangerous that only lack of understanding can account for the stolid disgust with which the people of Britain have swallowed the ugly pill. They are

puzzled and anxious, uneasily listening to what the radio tells them, but deeply conscious of the difficulty of getting at the full facts of the case. There is a vague but strong feeling that we have suffered a moral defeat, and a dangerous one, carrying within it seeds of a catastrophe which will not confine itself to morals and diplomacy alone. There is an irritable feeling that the present tragic stalemate with India is both unnecessary and fantastic.

Fantastic it certainly is. The discomfort of our moral position has been obvious to ourselves as well as to the world ever since September, 1941, when Mr. Churchill stated in the House of Commons that the noble aims of the Atlantic Charter ("... They respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of Government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them . . .") did not apply to India; but the element of tragic absurdity is a development of the last few weeks.

Consider the position. India is a country of 400 million people—three-quarters of the population of the British Empire and one-sixth of the whole human race. The overwhelming majority of those 400 millions has expressed itself, through its popular leaders, as sympathetic to our cause and deeply concerned in the world struggle against Fascism. They have expressed themselves as willing to co-operate in the war as an ally to the fullest extent of India's vast resources in men and materials, and their only quarrel with us is a bitter disagreement as to how that co-operation shall be used.

It is like two able-bodied men quarrelling to the point of blows as to how to put out a fire. They abuse each other and struggle while the fire roars on unchecked, and their enemies watch delightedly to see the house burn down.

In their simplest terms (which we will examine later in detail) the two sides of the quarrel can be stated in this way:—

The Congress leaders are demanding free democratic status for India *now*, not simply as the price of Indian co-operation in the war, but also as an essential psychological and practical condition of that co-operation.

The British Government is offering a promise of Dominion Status for India *after the war*, and in the meantime requires immediate co-operation in the defence of India as a British possession.

To understand the psychological necessity, to the Indian people, of the substance of freedom *now* rather than its shadow in the future, we must remember the recent history of the Chinese peoples, defeated in every war for a hundred years, who now, since uniting as a nation under their own popular government, have for five years successfully resisted the aggression of Japan. It is helpful also to glance at the often-made comparison between the heroic record of the Red Army in the present war, and the none too glorious history of the "Russian steam-roller" under the Tsar from 1914-1917. On the one hand you have an army drawn from an unwilling people to fight for a despotism they hated: on the other a united nation mobilised to the last man and woman, and passionately determined to defend their hard-won freedom against the Fascist aggressor.

To rally a people of 400 millions to arms, it is necessary to give that people something to fight for. Congress believes that the Indian people cannot fight wholeheartedly for the British Raj from which they have been struggling for half a century to escape, any more than the Russian armies of 1914, already on the tide of a nation-

wide struggle for freedom, could fight wholeheartedly under the Tsaiist rule. The flame of freedom, for which the United Nations are fighting, must, they say, be lit in India before she can blaze up into effectual resistance against the new would-be conqueror. Without that vital spark she is an unwilling conscript, mistrustful and suspicious, smouldering with resentment and the memory of broken promises and her own bitter history.

Is it possible that we have allowed this vast potential ally, who has asked so urgently to be allowed to stand with us, with America, with China and the Soviet Union, in a common front against a common enemy, to sink into this position?

The situation would be farcical if it were not so tragic. While our Russian allies are fighting desperately inch by inch through one of the greatest series of battles in history, while America is engaged in the Pacific and still many months from her maximum war production, while China enters on the sixth year of her struggle against the invader, and Japan, gorged with anti-British successes in the East, is already threatening the seaboard and frontiers of India, we, isolated in Europe and deeply involved in defensive warfare at the end of long and dangerous lines of communication abroad, are behaving as though we could afford to throw away the greatest potential ally that is left to us.

Instead of straining every nerve to enlist India's co-operation while yet there is time—and time, like the shadow on a sundial, is shrinking while we watch—we have imprisoned India's popular leaders and renewed the old weary embittering policy of repression, imprisonment, lathi charges and whipping orders, as though we were determined to convert India to irreparable hostility, and throw her finally into the arms of Japan.

It is not a sane course, and like so many forms of

insanity, may prove suicidal. It is in the hope of preventing what may be inevitable tragedy that I propose to examine briefly the events and states of mind which have made this grotesque situation possible; to study the average Englishman's point of view and contrast it with that of the Indian; to try and discern the facts through the haze of prejudice and propaganda on both sides, and if possible bridge the gap between the two points of view with some mutually acceptable plan. In other words, to discover if there is not some commonsense solution which we can follow and which can end this present deadlock. It is to the hope of settlement that this pamphlet is dedicated, and if in seeking for it we wind through intricate and difficult ways, one must remember that where strong feelings are involved there is nothing so tortuous as the behaviour of the human mind.

THE AVERAGE MAN'S VIEW

VERY few of us are specialists on India. In childhood we are taught to recognise an inverted red triangle on the map as one of the largest single units of the British Empire. In adolescence we read some Kipling and are given a smattering of British Indian history from English text books. To this is added, later, a jumbled impression that the country contains palm trees, elephants, some countless millions of coloured people, and the Taj Mahal. Also, naturally, a romantic superstructure of British garrisons where the social life is rather gay and it is very easy to get married.

With this sketchy conception the average British boy leaves school, and for any further knowledge of India which may be acquired relies, without much enthusiasm or interest, on the newspapers. Through these he becomes familiar with a somewhat grotesque spectacled figure called Gandhi, who invented a policy called non-violence and yet seems to be a bit of a trouble maker; with the names of a few rich Indian princes who appear at Ascot and whose bath water is mysteriously prized as a beverage; and with the idea that out of the general welter of India some magnificent fighting regiments such as the Gurkhas, Sikhs and Bengal Lancers have been evolved. Concerning these last the chief available data is provided by the movies.

Paramount in most of our minds is the conviction that the Indians are an inferior (because coloured and backward) race. If any book on India has been bought and read, it is probably Miss Katharine Mayo's "Mother India," which dwells on India's dirt, illiteracy, superstition and cow-worship. There are jokes about learned

Babus and their funny English, and there is a widespread belief that, though many educated Indians have wonderful memories and are good at examinations, they are hopelessly inefficient in executive positions and therefore quite incapable of self-government.

Those of us who have had leisure to go further into the subject know, moreover, that the British have had India for a long time and have invested a great deal of money in the development of the country. We have built railways and seaports and telegraph systems, and spend millions a year on the maintenance of the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Army. These investments are certainly said to yield a high profit, but there is nothing dishonest in developing a backward country and finding that it pays. India is a wonderful market for British goods, and the British working-class standard of living would drop without it.

Besides, the advantage to India also has been enormous. Could the Indians have had those railways and roads, that network of communications, that ready access to western ideas and manufactured goods, if it had not been for the initial risk of the British investor? Could these things ever have been achieved by the Indian people, 92% cent of whom can still neither read nor write?

As things are, India has had the advantage of development by an advanced modern power, and Britain is reaping a certain profit for money invested and work done. Possibly, at this point, the Indians wish that the money invested and the profits were their own: very probably that is what they have their eye on when they demand—as they have demanded at intervals for as long as we can remember—that the British should quit India. But it would be manifestly unfair to the British investor if, at this juncture, the British Government withdrew control, since neither

capital nor interest could then be guaranteed. Also, with all our Indian developments in native hands, we could no longer be certain of a favourable Indian market. What, among other exports, would become of our cotton and woollen trades? Would we not be creating unnecessary unemployment and hardship at home?

Even setting aside this important question of profits, the average man looks dubiously at the prospect of an India left to her own devices with British authority withdrawn. True, we have all along been nursing and educating India towards a state of adult nationhood; it is our intention, when she is fit, to let her stand on her own feet; to admit her to the same status as Australia or Canada, thus proving the basic benevolence of British rule. But is India fit to take command of her own fortunes? Quite apart from the war, would not the different sects of India be at each other's throats the moment the firm control of government was withdrawn?

Hindu-Moslem riots have been a recurring feature of Indian news for decades, and Hindus and Moslems are only two of the many different Indian religious sects. Is their irreconcilability not proved beyond argument by the fact that, even at this point in the war, under the hourly threat of Japanese invasion, the Hindus and the Moslems cannot agree?

If they cannot come together in this crisis of their own defence, how could they hope to co-operate in a national government? What independent unity is possible for a country which speaks 225 separate languages?

The failure of the Cripps mission, with its definite and reasonable offers to the Indian leaders, can be taken as proof that there is no agreement among Indians themselves. On the withdrawal of British authority the country would fall into chaos, and while Nehru and Mr. Jinnah wrangled and Gandhi fasted and incited to non-

violence and rioting and terrorism spread through the fanatical or bewildered people, the Japanese would fall on the country from air, sea and land, passing like locusts over the outnumbered British forces, which would be strangled in the very attempt to defend a country which had stabbed them in the back.

This war has brought the problem of India to the average man's notice with an unpleasant urgency which the subject has hardly achieved since the Indian Mutiny. Though the war has precipitated it, it is not, however, a war problem alone; it has been nagging at the edge of public consciousness for a good many years; and even before it was complicated by the present world crisis the average man, consulting such information as he had at hand, found it difficult to make much sense of the Indian Nationalist's solution.

All very well, he argued, to talk of a free India as the Congress leaders do; but what of that 90,000,000 Moslem minority represented by Mr. Jinnah and the Moslem League, who are in permanent and furious opposition to the Hindu Congress? It is obviously a mistake to say that Congress represents India when it represents only the Hindus. They may be in a majority, but they are in many ways inferior to the Moslems, and the Moslem "minority" is 90 millions strong. Through Mr. Jinnah, who is their chosen leader, and whose views are fully reported in the British press, they have repeatedly expressed their determination not to submit to the rule of that slight Hindu majority of which Congress is the mouthpiece, and which would certainly tyrannise over them once it had seized full power. Under British rule they enjoy equal rights with the Hindus, and would refuse to be a repressed minority in an officially Hindu India.

Quite reasonably, it is said, the Moslems have offered a solution, which is that certain Indian States in which

the majority of the population is Moslem, shall, in the event of the British leaving India, be partitioned off under the name of Pakistan and be given an independence of their own. They envisage Pakistan as an Indian Ulster; with this difference, that Ulster is still a part of Britain, whereas the British Government would of course be given no say in Pakistan.

Then, what of those Indian States of which one occasionally hears? They are, to all intents and purposes, independent kingdoms, and have been so since time immemorial—ruled by their own royal princes who have nothing to do with Congress and are loyal to Britain. These princes, the Indians' own royalty and among the richest men in the world, are positively hostile to the ideas of the Congress agitators. They have separate treaties with the British Government, in the last war they raised armies to fight beside our own, and they are definitely opposed to joining in any sort of democratic federation with the rest of India.

The British Government is morally responsible to these Indian States and to their rulers, who have been loyal and helpful in the past, and who even in the present desire no closer connection with the rest of India. It is equally responsible to the religious minorities, of whom the Moslems are by far the most numerous sect, but of which there are also many others, representing together at least a tenth of the population. It would surely be base to desert these old allies and these minorities which we have protected for so long? Surely wicked to abandon India to the mob violence and civil wars which would destroy her once the restraining hand of the British Raj were withdrawn?

If these arguments have force in times of peace, how irresistible they become in the present crisis of war! For there is now added to them the impossibility of transfer-

ring power—a constitutional change involving months, even years, of work—at the very moment when our whole national effort is absorbed in the life-and-death struggle against Germany and Japan. Even to demand such a course at such a time is an act of treachery, fastening on our desperate need as the opportunity for pistol-point blackmail and sordid political bargaining.

But suppose we weakly concede the blackmailer his point. What then will happen to the defence of India? Without the firm hand of the Viccroy and his unified executive control, the quarrelling Moslems and Hindus, the unarmed and inexperienced masses of India, would be worse than helpless. Can the average man be such a fool as to think that they could succeed against the Japanese? It is often said that the only good fighters in India are the Moslem regiments, and even these would surely become disaffected once authority had been invested in the Hindu majority. It is even possible that an independent India would desert her more war-minded leaders and range herself behind the spell-binding Gandhi, who, as we have always known, is a pacifist, and whose recently discovered papers have revealed his willingness to negotiate with Japan.

After all, the average man cannot honestly deny that the British Government seems to have made India a fair offer. It has guaranteed India's independence after the war, or at the very least promised Dominion status—and why should India despise a status with which Canada is satisfied? Such a status, though implying partnership in the British Commonwealth, also carries with it the Dominion's own option to vote itself out of the Empire if its people so wish it. The fact that Canada and New Zealand have not seceded does not mean that India could not do so if she chose.

This offer, which was what the average man had hoped

for as being both fair and acceptable, was confirmed by the recent Cripps mission to India, carrying with it also the Government's offer to admit more Indian members to the Viceroy's Council (on which Indians are at this very moment in a majority), and to agree to the appointment of a native Indian Minister of Defence. Further than that it would surely not be reasonable for the British Government to go?

What do the Indians hope to gain by sabotaging the British Empire in its hour of need? For whatever can be said against it, the average man still acknowledges it in his heart as the greatest benefactor of the human race, the strongest guarantee of security and maintenance of the present order. India is the corner-stone of the Empire, and has been so for nearly two hundred years. If, at this critical hour, she is allowed to bow herself out of the Empire, what is the use of sacrificing British lives to defend her?

Before answering that question, so often heard in the average man's mouth in Britain in the last few weeks, let us try and see how far he is right in the facts on which he bases his questions and forms his opinions.

III

THE INDIAN'S VIEW

THE ordinary man in Britain has, generally speaking, only a sketchy idea of the history of foreign countries. He remembers, however, the chief events in the history of his own.

The same is true of Indians. All nations have a tendency to remember their own histories, and the Indian is no exception. He remembers it even with peculiar bitterness, as people do who consider that they are still suffering from ancient wrongs; and he finds a special bitterness and frustration in the fact that the ordinary man in Britain, who is a human being like himself, has only the haziest idea that those wrongs ever existed, and certainly no understanding of the consequent moulding of the Indian's opinions and aspirations, nor even any clear idea of what the Indian wants or why he wants it.

One of the basic ideas which the ordinary Briton finds difficult to appreciate is the desire, common to all Indians, of whatever party, caste or religion, to be "free". At first glance it seems curious that we should have difficulty in understanding this, since we are a freedom-loving people, who have enjoyed freedom of one sort or another for so long that we have come to take it for granted, and to be incredulous and even a little arrogant over any foreign suggestion that we might one day be otherwise. But perhaps it is this very habit of freedom which makes us so slow to understand the violent desire for it in a people who for nearly two centuries have known nothing but the armed authority of a foreign race. The Indian, who remembers his history in his bones as we do ours, sees us not as we see ourselves, but as the oppressor. He sees India not as a profitable possession, but as his native land,

and himself as a member of a nation so numerous that with his fellow Indians he represents one-sixth of the human race. He in his turn finds it difficult to understand why that nation should remain in perpetual thrall to a foreign conqueror, especially when that conqueror has progressed to the stage of disclaiming the greedy imperialism of the past, and praising and even fighting for the noble ideal of freedom for all nations. He is embittered by finding himself debarred from participation in these ideals by a theoretical inferiority of colour and race.

The Indian remembers (as many of us do not) that when Europeans first came to India, which was at the beginning of the sixteenth century, his country was well able to bear comparison with the civilisations of the west. India, which is now a country of poor people, was then fabulously wealthy; it was the almost mythical riches of the Indies which led so many European adventurers to lose their lives in attempts to discover a sea route to this source of plenty. Indian craftsmanship at that time was among the finest in the world; hand-workers in cotton, silk, carpets, silver and ivory had evolved a technical excellence unknown in the west; their textiles were of a richness and beauty which has never been surpassed, and were the envy of Europe when the first merchants carried them home. Indian products were, indeed, so rich and various that one of the chief problems of the early European traders was to find western goods which the Indians considered acceptable as exchange.

India in the sixteenth century, then, in point of wealth, industry and independence of the west, was as different as it is possible to imagine from the India of today. To understand how the change has come about (and the change and its causes have an extremely important bearing on the present situation) we must make a brief survey of the intervening history.

The Portuguese were the first traders from Europe to tap the source. They were closely followed, in the course of the next hundred years after their discovery of a route, by the Dutch, the British and the French, and evidence of the wealth of the untouched continent began to flow to Europe. "This city," wrote Clive in 1757 of the capital of Bengal, "is as extensive, populous and rich as the city of London, with this difference, that there were individuals in the first possessing infinitely greater property than in the last city."

While the English under Queen Elizabeth were beginning to harry the maritime trade of Spain, the chief provinces of India were being united by conquest under Akbar the Great, the real founder of the Mogul Dynasty, whose name is revered in India to this day not only as a warrior but as one of the greatest civil administrators of history. It was during his reign that the East India Company, founded by Queen Elizabeth as a small body of merchant adventurers bent on seeking their fortunes in the Indies, established their first trading stations on the Indian coast and obtained their original concessions from local princes.

The Great Moguls ruled India roughly from the middle of the sixteenth to the beginning of the eighteenth century. By the end of that period the vigour of their line was exhausted; they still held nominal power but in reality their empire was breaking up; Mohammedan courtiers and Mahratta generals were hastening the disintegration by private wars to establish separate kingdoms. Already weakened by disunity, India was further harried by foreign invaders from the North, and it was at this point that the British under Clive and the French under Dupleix began their great struggle for a European domination of India.

The position of the European traders had by this time

changed out of all recognition in India. The Portuguese and the Dutch had been pushed out, the once small East India Company was now armed and powerfully established with garrisons at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras; the French had fortified rival stations at Mahé, Chander-nagore and Pondicherry.

The successive wars between British and French on Indian soil can be differently interpreted, according to how you wish to see the result. Official British history represents the arming of the East India Company and its progressive conquests as a necessity thrust on peaceful traders, who took up arms in their own defence in the period of civil war and unrest at the collapse of the Mogul Empire. Indian history sees their conduct as pure piracy and opportunism, seizing the advantage of internal disunity to ally themselves and their superior arms first with one Indian ruler and then another, until bit by bit they had penetrated far into India. Until (to quote the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*) they "found themselves at last in the place of the Moguls". Indian history does not support the view that this was a surprise.

The various Indian petty rulers who had allied themselves, some with the British and some with the French, with a view to turning these well-armed European forces to their own advantage, found that they had all along been the puppets of rival conquerors. Nobody emerges from the history of this period with a high moral record, but the British emerged from the battle of Plassey with the prize. French dreams of an Indian Empire were shattered for ever, and the East India Company, free at last from its rivals and sufficiently far from home to be comparatively safe even from British interference, opened a grand campaign of selling principalities, levying tributes and taxes, extorting crippling compensation for the war, and otherwise making the fortunes of its administrators.

The following period is one which not even the most sanguine of British histories can represent as respectable. Clive (again we will quote the *Encyclopædia Britannica*) "had left behind him no system of government, but merely the tradition that unlimited sums of money might be extracted from the natives by the mere terror of the British name." He was succeeded as Governor of Bengal by Warren Hastings, who became the first titular Governor-General of India, and who is chiefly remembered today for having been impeached before the House of Lords for "high crimes and misdemeanours" during his governorship, a charge on which he was acquitted after a trial which lasted for seven years.

The ethics of Hastings' conduct as Governor, the wars, extortions and atrocities attributed to him are still subjects of controversy among historians; certainly he was a brilliant administrator, and once one has admitted the premise that the British had any right to be in India at all, one has to agree that he served the East India Company magnificently, bled the country with efficiency and candour, and developed the fruits of Clive's military achievements into the beginnings of an empire.

One of the features which must strike any reader of the letters and records of the East India Company is the frankness with which, in this early period of British domination, India was regarded purely as a source of plunder. Clive's letters to the directors in 1765 exult over the "clear gain" to the Company of nearly £2,000,000 sterling; Scrafton, one of Clive's councillors, reports that they have been able "to carry on the whole trade of India (China excepted) for three years without sending out one ounce of bullion." In the House of Commons' Select Committee's Ninth Report, 1783, we find that "the whole exported produce of the country, so far as the Company is concerned, is not exchanged in the course of barter,

but it is taken away without any return or payment whatever."

Warren Hastings, when his turn came, was equally candid, both as regards profits and the effect of the Company's rule on the population. "Notwithstanding the loss of at least one third of the inhabitants of the province," he wrote to the Directors in 1772, "and the consequent decrease in cultivation, the net collections of the year 1771 exceeded even those of 1768."¹

The Company had, in the words of H. G. Wells,² "learnt to trade in states and peoples during the eighteenth century," and by the end of that period some alarm was being felt at home as to the effects of this policy on profits. William Fullerton, a member of Parliament, wrote in 1787:

"In former times the Bengal countries were the granary of nations, and the repository of commerce, wealth and manufacture in the East. . . .

"But such has been the restless energy of our mis-government that within the short space of twenty years many parts of these countries have been reduced to the appearance of a desert. The fields are no longer cultivated; extensive tracts are already overgrown with thickets; the husbandman is plundered; the manufacturer oppressed; famine has been repeatedly endured; and depopulation has ensued."

"Were we to be driven out of India this day," cried Burke in the House of Commons, "nothing would remain to tell that it had been possessed, during this inglorious period of our dominion, by anything better than the orang-utan or the tiger."

Lord Cornwallis, Warren Hastings' successor as Governor-General, reported in his minute of September

¹ Warren Hastings, *Report to the Court of Directors*, Nov. 3, 1772.

² H. G. Wells, *Outline of History*.

18, 1789. "I may safely assert that one third of the Company's territory in Hindustan is now a jungle inhabited only by wild beasts."

The Company, during its two and a half centuries of rule, undoubtedly gave India the most brutal and ruthless example of British methods that she has ever known; but there was a contemporary frankness of expression about this open brigandage which gives the records of the time a startling, if painful, interest. It was frank piracy and plunder, founding great English fortunes by robbery and violence, and nobody thought of pretending that it was anything else. The real change of front did not come until 1858, when the Government, alarmed by the narrowness of the margin by which we had kept India during the Mutiny, passed the Act for the Better Government of India, by which administration was transferred from the Company to the Crown, and improved methods of economic exploitation were accompanied by a careful whitewashing of previous history. "The country which had once put Clive and Warren Hastings on trial for their unrighteous treatment of Indians was now persuaded to regard them as entirely chivalrous and devoted figures. They were 'empire builders'."¹

This transfer marked the close of the first period of British domination in India. It was, and remains, an ugly chapter in our history, and is more clearly remembered in India than it is at home. The present-day reader of that history will turn the last page of that sordid chapter with remorse; cheered, however, by the assumption that the coming pages, dealing with the truly Imperialist history of British India, will make happier reading.

¹ H. G. Wells, *Outline of History*.

IV

BRITISH IMPERIAL INDIA

WHEN the Crown took over the administration of India it took possession of a continent to which a curious thing had happened, though the effects and even the happening itself were too close to be appreciated at the time. The preceding period of conquest had done more than enrich British adventurers and open the eyes of the world to the value of the prize; it had set an artificial check on the natural development of the country.

We are in a better position than the Victorians to see this in historical perspective; more than eighty years have passed since then, and we have learned to read history in terms of the progressive evolution of peoples and nations, rather than as a succession of the reigns of different kings. We have come to know our own history not merely as a list of royal dates and acts, but as a steady progress from slavery under the Romans to feudalism under our own kings and barons, from feudalism to early industrialism and the rise of the middle classes, and from the Industrial Revolution to the modern, though still developing, state in which we live and work today. We have seen America develop from a Colonial possession into the most highly industrialised power in the modern world. We have seen France emerge from a feudal monarchy, and Germany from a conglomeration of feudal principalities, into modern industrial states. We have seen Japan throw off the habits of the East and absorb western ideas in the course of her intensive industrial development.

We have not seen the comparable development of India because it has not taken place. The dead weight of foreign dominion was placed on her neck two centuries ago, and the growth which is as natural to a nation as to

a child has been stunted by the pressure.

At first glance this statement seems incompatible with the British "development" of India. Those ports and railways and investments come to mind, with their implication of all the benefits of the modern world. But it is necessary to be certain for whose benefit those mechanical arrangements have been made, and whether natural and native development has been encouraged to keep pace with them.

Has the average Indian benefited from the increased profits? Has his economic position been improved? Is he better fed, better housed, and better educated? Have educational and health services advanced hand in hand with those railways, those banks, those systems of communication? Have industries grown up in which he can earn a living wage and employ labour? Is he taking his place in the natural industrial development of the world?

If the answer to most or all of these questions is No, the conclusion is inevitable that the British imperial development of India has been planned and carried out *not* in relation to the needs and natural development of the people, but for some other reason such as the benefit of British trade.

Let us consider these questions briefly in turn.

The highest estimate ever made of the average Indian Income was given in the Simon Commission report of 1930, where it was qualified as a "most optimistic" figure. It was 5d. a day.

The 1931 Census figures show that only 10.35% of the population is dependent on industry, while the total number of workers under the Factories Act of the same year was less than 1% of the population. Today more than three-quarters of the population depends on the land, and the Report of the Indian Central Banking Enquiry Committee in 1931 shows that the average in-

come of the Indian agriculturist is less than £3 a year or approximately 2d. a day. The land, naturally fertile and capable of supporting a far larger population than India at present contains, is overcrowded with peasant small-holders and landless labourers whose poverty-stricken methods are exhausting the soil, and whose poverty also restricts them to so small an acreage that they subsist under, on, and barely above the famine line. As Dr. H. H. Mann¹ estimated in 1917, "In the pre-British days and in the early days of British rule the holdings were usually of a fair size, most frequently more than 9 or 10 acres, while individual holdings of less than 2 acres were hardly known. Now the number of holdings is more than doubled, and 81% of these holdings are under 10 acres in size, while no less than 60% are less than 5 acres." Today in many areas more than 30% of the holdings are less than 1 acre. In addition to this gradual impoverishment of the cultivated land, large areas have been allowed to revert to jungle, and ancient native canals and irrigation systems to decay and disappear, so that 35.5%² of the cultivable land of India has gone out of cultivation and is lying waste.

This was not the case when the British first came to India. The native hand industries (especially textiles, whose excellence was unrivalled) supported a balanced proportion of the population. In the course of converting India from a self-supporting sub-continent into a source of raw materials for British industry and a vast dependent market for British manufactures, those native industries have been stamped out and destroyed, so that the spinners and weavers and hand-workers and their descendants have been thrown on the land as their only remaining support.

¹ and ² Dr. H. H. Mann, *Bombay Director of Agriculture, Land and Labour in a Deccan Village, 1917*.

Modern industry has not taken the place of the old handicrafts, as it would have done in the course of natural development; British policy laid it down in the nineteenth century that India was to feed British industry with her rich raw materials, and buy back the manufactured goods which those materials produced. This policy would have been defeated by an India consuming her own goods, instead of exporting her materials at a low price and buying them back in the form of consumer goods from the other side of the world; consequently Indian industry had to be stunted by crippling excise duties in the interest of our industrial development at home. The economic position of the Indian has accordingly deteriorated to one of the lowest levels of misery in the modern world.

But perhaps, in spite of all, he is better fed? Perhaps we shall find in compensating care and social services the evidence of our benevolent intention, as a good farmer takes thought for the condition of the beasts from whom he makes his income?

But on 2d. a day it is not possible to eat well, even in India, and even if that 2d. be spent on food alone and on none of the other necessities of life. The official cost for maintaining one Indian prisoner in jail is more than two and a half times the (also officially) estimated income of the average Indian agriculturist. Indian famine has become a byword, and still exists: as recently as 1933 Sir John Megaw, Director of the Indian Medical Service, estimated that nearly two-thirds of the population was seriously under-nourished. To quote "The Wealth and Taxable Capacity of India" by two leading Indian economists, "The average Indian income is just enough either to feed two men in every three of the population, or give them all, two, in place of every three meals they need, on condition that they all consent to go naked, live

out of doors all the year round, have no amusement or recreation, and want nothing else but food, and that the lowest, the coarsest, the least nutritious."

On such a basis it is not surprising that public health in India is extremely low, that physique is generally poor and disease rampant. Nor is it surprising that the death rate records the Indian's expectation of life as being less than half that of an inhabitant of England and Wales. According to the census of 1921 the average length of life for an adult Indian was between 21 and 25 years.

Public services are on so small a scale that sanitation for the working classes scarcely exists, and only one hospital bed is provided for every 3,810 of the population. Housing, as a term, must be pure irony as applied to the conditions that exist. The 1931 census states that 74% of the total population of Bombay were living in one-room tenements, and of these 15,490 were living at the rate of twenty and more persons to a room.

We can scarcely congratulate ourselves on educational advance under British rule. If we are tempted to suppose that, whatever omissions or mistakes we made in the early years, the present Indian generation at least must have been raised by our civilising influence, we are confronted by the fact that in 1931 the population was still 92% illiterate. In 1911, 91% of the people could neither read nor write—a comparison showing that illiteracy has been decreased by 2% in the course of twenty years. Educational statistics for the year 1934-1935 reveal that only 4.9% of the population was receiving any sort of primary education, and that of this tiny percentage only a third received any education for a period longer than one year. Is this what the average man understands when he contentedly refers to our care for the education of India?

Comparisons, we are always taught, are odious. The Indian certainly finds them so when he looks abroad, and

sees what progress has been made even in one generation with other backward peoples. The argument, so often produced against his aspirations in the past, that only the slowest progress is possible with an Asiatic, poor, backward and illiterate people, has lost its power for ever since he has seen in his own time the raising to adult nationhood of the peoples of the Soviet Union.

The comparison between the two countries is highly instructive, since Russia under Tsarist rule was also a "peasant continent" populated by a primitive, backward, oppressed and largely illiterate population, composed partly of European, partly of Asiatic peoples, speaking many different tongues. Some of those Asiatic peoples were, as lately as 1913, far more backward and illiterate than the Indians, for in 1911 India was 6% literate, while in 1913 the literacy figure for Tajikistan in Asiatic Russia was one-half of 1%.

The Russian peasant was land-starved, like the Indian. *Like the Indian he existed on the edge of famine on tiny holdings or as a landless labourer. His expectation of life was short. He was caught in a vice between the land-tax collector and the money-lender. He had no health or social services and practically no education. Unsupported by industry, he lived in overcrowded conditions on the land, which he exhausted with his machine-less methods of agriculture.*

This Russia, as the Indian knows, presents a staggeringly different picture from the Soviet Union today. In the last twenty years Russian large-scale industry has increased eight-fold, and the former "peasant continent" has become the foremost industrial country in Europe and the second in the world. In the same period, and with all the technical advantages of British development, Indian industrial production has increased at one-sixteenth, and industrial employment at one-nineteenth of

the Russian rate. Industrial employment has even *decreased* by 12.6% in relation to the growth of the population.

In Russia illiteracy has been reduced from 78% to 8% in twenty years; for the last fourteen of those years there has been compulsory universal education. In India in the same period illiteracy has been reduced from 91% to 92%.

In Russia the state expenditure on public health has increased seventy-fold in twenty years. In India it has increased by 2.1%, its economy illustrated by a public health expenditure in the year 1935-1936 of 24d. a head. Hospital beds in Russia are twelve times as numerous as the proportionate provision in India. Small-pox deaths have been reduced by 90%; in India by 0.2%. In 1913 Tsarist Russia had 19,800 doctors; by 1937 Soviet Russia had 97,000. In India the total number of doctors graduated in the year 1934-1935 was 630.

The obstacle presented by numerous different languages has not been allowed to stand in the way of either unity or progress in the Soviet Union. Minority languages are preserved side by side with the teaching of Russian; in 1935 already there were schools in the U.S.S.R. teaching in more than eighty different languages,¹ and the Asiatic republics of the Union have their own technical schools and universities. News of the activities of the different peoples is exchanged through newspapers published in 88 different languages.

The contrast between the methods of treating the language difficulty in the two countries is all the more striking when it is made clear that the "225 separate languages" of India, so dear to the apologist of neglect of Indian education, are in reality no more than twelve main languages, each with its own group of related

¹ Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Soviet Communism*.

acts. Investigation of the census figures on which the state of "225 separate languages" is based reveals that fewer than 128 of these belong to Burma, which was rated from India in 1937. Hindustani, on its way to becoming the language of India, is with its dialects spoken by 120 millions of the people. It is the official language of Congress, and has always been found sufficient for military orders to the Indian Army. "There is no doubt," says the Census of India Report for 1921, "that there is a common element in the main languages of Northern and Central India which renders their speakers without any great conscious change in their speech mutually intelligible to one another, and this common element already forms an approach to a *lingua franca* over a large part of India."

There are, however, other serious communal differences in India, and before going any further it will be necessary to consider them from both the British and the Indian points of view. It is possible that they will prove even more vital than the difficulty of language; perhaps incapable of any immediate solution.

V

COMMUNAL DIFFERENCES IN INDIA

COMMUNAL differences—that is to say, divergences of political opinion between the different religious communities—are one of the great problems of modern India. As in many other countries, there are various religions and their tributary sects, and the two largest bodies, the Moslems and the Hindus, contain many millions of all classes of Indians. Cutting across the religious differences there are also differences of caste, or religio-social divisions; these caste divisions are responsible for the problem of the “depressed classes”, or untouchables.

To see a roughly comparable picture of what such communal differences would be like if they existed in this country, one must imagine English Protestants as being still (as they once were) bitterly hostile to English Catholics, and as being separately represented in Parliament, where the Catholics, though less numerous, would enjoy special privileges. One must imagine the Non-conformist churches as being also politically separate, and rioting from time to time against members of the established church; and a similar situation existing between church and chapel elements in Wales, and between Wesleyans and, say, Baptists and Plymouth Brethren. As well as this one must imagine a considerable body of the population—dustmen and cleaners and other performers of dirty work, together with many thousands of middle-class families whose ancestors long ago were dustmen or cleaners—suffering under continued social and civil disabilities; not allowed to use the public water supply, go to church with other people, join the police force or serve in the army.

If such conditions existed, we should be a very much

less united nation than we are, and any foreign power which had an interest in keeping us disunited would use every underground method of promoting them.

To add to the confusion in India there are also the Native States, and here, to arrive at a parallel, we must imagine a score or more of areas of different size, some as large as a county and some no bigger than a parish, scattered all over England, and left by the Government under the autocratic rule of various members of the aristocracy. These modern descendants of the mediæval barons would each have a Government agent appointed to his territory, but would otherwise be allowed to impose what laws he liked on the people in his area, conscript labour, inflict what punishments he chose, and absorb whatever proportion he fancied of the earnings of his people into his personal income. Each petty autocrat would be kept safe from the rebellion of his subjects by armed Government support, and would be able to call in the British army whenever there was trouble. It would not surprise us if, in these circumstances, the rich noblemen so favoured by the Government were conspicuously loyal to it.

Fortunately for us, such communal differences do not exist in Britain. Nor, were they imposed, would they be tolerated. But they *do* exist in India, and to a serious degree; so much so, that it is strongly argued in Britain that no sort of national unity or self-government is possible. In order to form a just opinion of this argument, let us examine the causes and extent of these various differences.

The greatest of them is undoubtedly between the Moslems and the Hindus. There are 240 million Hindus in India—68% of the total population. The Moslems are 78 millions, or 22% of the whole. All the other smaller bodies together make up the remaining 10%.

It will be clearly seen that the Hindus are in the

majority, since there are more than three times as many of them as there are Moslems, and it is of this majority that the Moslem League complains. The argument of Mr. Jinnah, leader of the Moslem League, is briefly this—that if the Indian National Congress, whose members are predominantly Hindus, were allowed to form an Indian Government, the Moslems would inevitably become an oppressed minority. He does not say what form this dread oppression is expected to take, but he does offer a solution—namely, that those provinces in which the Moslems outnumber the Hindus should be made into separate Moslem states, wholly independent of the rest of India, under the name of Pakistan. Mr. Jinnah does not say what would happen to the Hindu minority in these Moslem states, nor does he suggest that Pakistan should have any connection with Britain. Like every other body of opinion in India, with the exception of the Princes, the Moslem League stands firm for Indian independence.

Mr Jinnah's opinions, and the differences of the Moslem League with Congress, have always received full publicity in this country, with the result that the average man honestly believes that the Moslem League represents all the Indian Moslems on the one hand, and Congress all the Hindus on the other. He constantly hears references, both in the newspapers and on the B.B.C., to the Moslem League as "representing India's 90 million Moslems", while Gandhi, one of the leading figures of Congress, is known to be a particularly holy Hindu.

The numerical facts, however, present a very different picture. In the first place Congress is a political and nationalist, but not a religious body, and though the Hindu members outnumber the Moslem members, they do so in almost exactly the same proportion as in the whole population. Membership of Congress is not deter-

mined by religious beliefs, but by agreement with its nationalist policy and by the ability to pay a membership fee equivalent to 5d. a year. Dr Azad, the President of Congress, and one of India's foremost scholars, is a Moslem. Jawaharlal Nehru, the secretary of Congress, has repeatedly stressed the undenominational character of the party, and the absolute necessity for keeping religious differences out of politics.

When we try to assess the figures of the Moslem League we encounter some difficulty, since they have always refused to publish their membership—a curious reticence on the part of a body claiming to represent 90 millions of the people. We do know, however, that there are two great sects of Moslems, the Sunnis and the Shias, and that the Shias, who comprise 20% of the Moslem population, are opposed to the League. We also know that the Mumins (an occupational and economic division of the Moslems) who number 45 million, support the Congress. (Some, of course, of the Mumins will also be Shias, but even so the figures are significant). Then, the North-West Frontier Province, with a 90% Moslem population, is a Congress stronghold, returning not a single Moslem League representative to the Legislative Assemblies. The Moslem Premiers of Sind¹ and Bengal have disowned the League, and the Premier of the Punjab, the only other province with a Moslem majority, is opposed to partition and supports the Congress call for a united India. With such a formidable body of Moslem opinion at odds with the League, it is not surprising that in the 1937 general elections to the Legislative Assemblies, the Moslem League candidates polled less than 5% of the Moslem

¹ On October 10th, 1942, Mr. Allah Balksh, the Moslem Premier of Sind, was removed from office by the Governor of Sind, Sir Hugh Dow, following the Premier's renunciation of his British titles as a protest against Mr. Churchill's statement on India in the House of Commons on September 10th, in which the Prime Minister commended the Government of India's recent repressive measures.

votes cast; nor that the League itself refuses to support its claims by publishing its membership.

Why, then, is such prominence given to the political differences between Congress (which is after all more representative of all-Indian opinion than any other body, and which stands for what is numerically the greatest national movement in the world, the Chinese excepted) and the small but very vigorous Moslem League, which represents so low a percentage of the Indian Moslems? There are few traces of Hindu-Moslem hostility before the period of British rule; its acute stage developed only since the establishment in 1900 of separate electorates, and even today many millions of Moslems and Hindus live and work together in perfect amity. The Simon Report confirmed this too in the case in the Native States, where the population is as mixed as in the provinces. Why should they be antagonistic politically when they live at peace in the same streets and villages, and join the same trades unions?

The answer lies chiefly in British Government policy. The political advantage of fostering division was long ago perceived; and though there have been many statements in Parliament disclaiming any intention of using that advantage, and many official pronouncements deplored this very division and exhorting the Indians to agreement, yet there are certain facts which must be placed beside these statements if we are to test their worth. We must not, for instance, ignore the less discreet attitude of such leading authorities on India as Sir John Strachey, who in 1888 wrote: "The truth plainly is that the existence side by side of these hostile creeds is one of the strong points in our political position in India": and we must consider the lesser known facts about the foundation of Mr. Jinnah's Moslem League.

It was founded in 1906, as the result of the petition of

a deputation of Moslems to the Viccroy, asking for separate electoral representation, with certain privileges. These requests were granted with such alacrity as to give rise to a suspicion that the deputation itself had been Government-inspired, a suspicion which subsequent events have considerably strengthened. "The political successes which have rewarded the efforts of the League," wrote Ramsay MacDonald in 1910, ". . . have been so signal as to give support to a suspicion that sinister influences have been at work, that the Mahominedan leaders were inspired by certain Anglo-Indian officials, and that these officials pulled wires in Simla and in London, and of malice aforethought sowed discord between the Hindu and the Mahomedan communities by showing the Mahomedans special favour." The rewards of this prudent policy have been seen at no time more clearly than in the present crisis, when Hindu-Moslem differences can, with every appearance of truth, be cited as one of the main arguments against the formation of an Indian National Government.

It is easy, now, to say that Indians are incapable of forming a national government while these differences exist, but it is scarcely sound argument to maintain that a thing which has never been tried can never be done. The underlying principle of all differing political bodies in India is Indian independence; there is no argument about that; but so long as hopes of preferential terms are held out to minorities, so long will those minorities agitate and obstruct—a fact very well understood by the government in power. It is a democratic principle that minorities should be respected and protected—but *not* to sabotage the will of the people voiced in a majority government.

Democracy means, as we know, government by the will of the people, and since the entire population of a country

can never quite agree, government in democratic countries is determined by the will of the majority. We in Britain in normal times have a majority government, with the chief disagreeing elements united in the Opposition. Why should this form be denied to India on grounds that it would be subjecting the country to what Sir Stafford Cripps described as a "tyrannous majority"?¹

What indeed is the Moslem League afraid of? It has never said. In those provinces where Hindus are in an overwhelming majority, there is no record of any oppression of the Moslems. Of the Congress leaders, Nehru has spent his life in the struggle against oppression, and Gandhi has espoused the cause of that most oppressed of Indian minorities, the Untouchables. The Moslem members of Congress are not afraid.

While these religio-political jealousies, however artificially fostered, would undoubtedly bequeath many problems to a National Indian Government, the Native

¹ "On the basis of right and justice and principle, I should have thought that nobody could have denied that India to-day is fully entitled to self-government. What answer have we to give to that demand, admitting, as the Governor General fully admits, the competence of the Indians to govern themselves, unless it be that our selfish desire to continue the exploitation of India as a part of our imperial monopoly is to override our conceptions of right and justice? . . . The argument has been brought forward by the Lord Privy Seal that it is difficult to work out any satisfactory method of central self-government for India because of the communal difficulty. That in my view is not a valid argument. The same could be said of Poland with its Russian, Jewish, German and Polish citizens. The same could be said of Czechoslovakia with its Sudetens, Czechs and Slovaks; and I cannot understand the argument, if it is put forward on the basis of democracy, which deprives a majority of its rights, in order to protect a minority. It may be necessary to modify some of the rights of a majority, and to get them to agree to such modifications, as the Congress has willingly agreed, but you are not justified in taking away the rights of a majority because you assert that you desire to protect a minority. If you do so, you are, in fact, converting the majority into the minority. . . . If you accept democracy, if you set up a democratic system, which is to ascertain which class, or caste, or party is in the majority, you must then accept the results of that democratic system, and, at the moment, whether you like it or not, the Congress party is the majority in British India."—Sir Stafford Cripps in the House of Commons, 26th October, 1939.

Princes could present no such difficulty, since, being already burdensome anachronisms, their status would collapse on the withdrawal of British support.

They have not always been the friends of British rule. Their loyalty dates from the period immediately following the Indian Mutiny of 1857 (for which their resentment against British annexation of their territories was largely responsible), when the fact was unpleasantly driven home that our imperialist rule in India would be short if the remaining princes and the peoples of British India should ever co-operate. From this time on, there was a change of policy towards the Indian Princes. Annexation of their territories ceased. Instead, they were wooed with promises of support and guarantees of sovereignty. A year after the Mutiny the Queen's Proclamation assured them, "We shall respect the rights, dignity and honour of the Native Princes as our own."

Three years after the Mutiny Lord Canning, Governor-General of India, was fairly frank as to the purpose of this change of policy. "It was long ago said by Sir John Malcolm that if we made all India into Zillahs (or British Districts) it was not in the nature of things that our Empire should last fifty years; but that if we could keep up a number of Native States without political power, but as royal instruments, we should exist in India as long as our naval supremacy was maintained. Of the substantial truth of this opinion I have no doubt; the recent events have made it more deserving of our attention than ever."

Seventy years later Professor Rushbrook-Williams, Adviser to the Indian States Delegation at the Round Table Conference, wrote with equal, though perhaps less conscious, candour in the *Evening Standard*, "The rulers of the Native States are very loyal to their British connection. Many of them owe their very existence to British justice and arms. Many of them would not be in existence

today had not British power supported them during the struggles of the latter part of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth century. Their affection and loyalty are important assets for Britain in the present troubles and in the readjustments which must come. . . . The situation of these feudatory States, checkerboarding all India as they do, are a great safeguard. It is like establishing a vast network of friendly fortresses in debatable territory. It would be difficult for a general rebellion against the British to sweep India because of this network of powerful loyal Native States."

How many of these "friendly fortresses" do we maintain in "debatable territory", and what are they like? There are 563 of them, they have a total area of 712,000 square miles and a population of 81 million, which is 24% of the total population of India. Some of them are large, like Hyderabad, which is as big as Italy, and some of them comprise only a few square miles. Their boundaries are arbitrarily laid down, and correspond to no geographical, racial or cultural divisions. Each State is ruled by an autocratic Prince with the advice of a British Resident or political agent, and they are scattered like confetti over the map of India.

The political power is, of course, actually vested in the British Resident or agent; the Princes are, as Lord Canning described them, "royal instruments", but they are allowed full power over their subject peoples, a concession which does much to ameliorate their status of puppets.

The Princes differ slightly in their methods of using this power. One or two have a reputation for enlightenment, and can claim that illiteracy among their subjects is somewhat less than in British India. Others have not progressed at all out of barbarism—conscripting slave labour, imprisoning without charge or trial, and punish-

ing by torture. Whereas in England the King receives roughly one-sixteen-hundredth of the national revenue, the Maharajah of Travancore (the most progressive State) appropriates one-seventeenth of the State income for his personal use, while the Maharajahs of Kashmir and Bikanir appropriate as much as one-fifth. Slave communities exist in many of the States; the 1921 Census Report estimated that there were 160,735 slaves in Rajputana and the Central Indian States alone. Under this system the Prince can compel any of his subjects to work, irrespective of sex or age, for no payment above the minimum of food required to keep the worker alive, and, in the worse States, does so. Flogging is a common form of punishment for both men and women. Taxes are imposed at will, there are no franchise, no public services that deserve the name, and no civil rights at all as we understand them. Free to impose these feudal conditions on their subjects, many of the Native Princes have become fabulously rich, and are familiar figures in the capitals of Europe where they go to spend what residues of their incomes they have not been able to lay out on their persons and their palaces.

Such princedoms as these, judged by any ordinarily civilised standards, are simply unnatural survivals from the dark ages. If the Indian development had followed a natural course, they would long ago have decayed and disappeared. Since, however, they have so perfectly served their purpose as "friendly fortresses" in "debatable territory" they have been propped up by British "justice and arms" and kept going into the middle of the twentieth century. Without British support they would disappear from a country which has long regarded them as an insupportable burden—which is why Congress does not see eye to eye with the British Government in regarding the Native Princes as an insoluble problem.

VI

INDIA AND THE WAR

BEFORE going on to examine the recent events in the Indian struggle of which the present deadlock is the outcome, it is necessary to have in our minds a clear idea of the origin and development of the Indian National Congress, its aims, what it represents, and the character of its present demands for Indian independence.

Congress was founded in 1885 by an English administrator, A. O. Hume, a shrewd and experienced official who in the course of his Indian career had become fully aware of the growing unrest under British rule, and was loyally concerned to discover some means of allaying it. Accordingly he convinced the then Governor-General, Lord Dufferin, that the energies of the educated middle classes might safely be guided into an organised channel and given an outlet. Lord Dufferin supported the scheme and Congress was founded, being subsequently described by Hume in the following words: "A safety-valve for great and growing forces, generated by our own action, was urgently needed and no more efficacious safety-valve than our own Congress could possibly be devised."

Unfortunately for his original idea, Congress did not for longer than a generation remain a harmless hobby for educated Indians. The unorganised bodies which were the beginnings of the Indian nationalist movement inevitably focused on it as a convenient debating ground, and the obvious mouthpiece of nationalist aspirations. Passing through many internal changes and struggles too numerous and complicated to be detailed here, Congress finally emerged at the end of the 1914-1918 war, under Gandhi's leadership and with a policy of non-violence, as the representative of the mass struggle for a free India.

On such a basis it was inevitable that Congress, as it outstripped all other political bodies and achieved the majority support of the people of India, should be democratic in character, international in its sympathy with the struggles of other peoples for national freedom, and essentially opposed to all the principles of Fascism. It is important to remember the consistency of the Congress attitude towards Fascism. At the time of Japan's attack on Manchuria, Italy's brutal conquest of Abyssinia, the Axis-promoted defeat of the Spanish Republican Government, and the betrayal of Czecho-Slovakia to Hitler, Congress made known its vigorous condemnation, and its disapproval of the Chamberlain "appeasement" policy. Congress has all along expressed its sympathy with the people of China and the people of Russia, and at no time has quibbled (would that all Governments could say the same!) over the rights of peoples to their own freedom, irrespective of race or colour.

Today, threatened with imminent invasion by Fascist Japan, Congress is fully committed to resistance. (It should be remembered that Chandra Bose, the Congress leader turned Fifth Columnist and so triumphantly used in propaganda broadcasts from Berlin, was thrust out from Congress before the outbreak of the war.) It is not on the fact, but on the methods of resistance that its leaders are divided. Gandhi, refusing to swerve from his pacifist philosophy, believes that the most effectual defence of which the unarmed masses of India are capable is "passive resistance"—a course exceedingly difficult to organise on a nation-wide scale and demanding almost superhuman courage of its followers. Nehru, more realist, and fully understanding that it is not the fate of India alone but world issues which are at stake, believes India can successfully defend herself only by being free and armed, and fighting as an ally beside the United Nations.

"We are not," he says, "seeking political freedom as the price of full co-operation in the war, but as an essential pre-condition of a people's war, the only effective war against Fascism."

That is the crux. Both sides of opinion demand resistance. Both demand freedom. The danger to our war effort lies in the risk that, disgusted with the British Government's refusal to consider the demands of Congress as expressed by Nehru, the majority will swing over to the pacifist policy of Gandhi, thus inviting the armed invasion of Japan and the ruin of the hopes both of the United Nations and of India.

The situation at present is both fantastic and alarming. We may well ask ourselves whether it is not already too late to hope for an improvement. Before we can judge of the possibility of that hope, and take steps according to our decision, we must have a clear idea of the development in recent months of the present tragic quarrel between Britain and India.

This clear idea is difficult to arrive at, owing to the very considerable degree of censorship ("the silent censorship" is the diplomat's word for it) existing even in normal times between this country and India, and intensified to a total black-out of free communications in wartime, so that the news that reaches us is heard only as a sort of distorted booming, like the voices of distant ships signalling through fog. This censorship now exists from here to India and from India to here, so that what appears in the press and is heard on the radio is only what the Government wishes to be seen and heard. An attentive pursuit, however, of the positive facts which stand like milestones along the course of British-Indian negotiations, from the beginning of the war to the present stalemate, will help us to form a fairly accurate picture.

The first move in this complicated game of chess is the

British Government's declaration, in September, 1939, that India was a belligerent in the war—a declaration made without any consultation with Indian leaders, or any reference to the wishes of the Indian people. This blatantly obvious indifference to Indian opinion was felt by all sections of the Indian people as deeply humiliating, emphasising as it did the total subjection of India, and the lack of importance attached by the Government to the wishes of the Indian people. Resentment of this indifference was intensified by a suspicion (in which India, as we can well remember, was not alone) of our real war aims. There had been no attempt to state them, and a foreign policy which had consecutively sacrificed Abyssinia, Spain and Czecho-Slovakia in its "appeasement" of the Axis powers and had refused or failed to make the obvious anti-Hitler alliance with the U.S.S.R., was one of which the strongest Indian disapproval had been consistently expressed.

Accordingly Congress, representing the main body of Indian opinion, considered and gave voice to this resentment; expressing, however, at the same time the willingness of India to co-operate fully in a truly democratic war against Fascist aggression; and invited the British Government to explain its war aims.¹ (It is worth while remembering that India was not alone in wishing to have our war aims put clearly before the world.)

To this request to state their war aims the Government did not reply. In October 1939, however, a very small piece was moved on the British side of the chessboard; the Government announced that their ultimate aim for India was Dominion status, and offered to appoint several more Indians to the Viceroy's Council.

These offers met with cool response in India. The offer

¹ See Appendix: All India Congress Committee's Resolution, October 10th, 1939.

to expand the Viceroy's Council was not followed up (it was not, in fact, fulfilled for nearly another two years), and in any case it held little interest for Indians, since the Indian members of the Council are not, as one might expect, representative of various bodies of Indian opinion and elected by Indian votes, but individual councillors hand-picked by the Viceroy himself and actually appointed by the King-Emperor. The Council, moreover, is responsible neither to the Legislature nor to the Indian people, but only to the British Government. It is significant that when, nearly two years later, five additional councillors were finally chosen, not a single one represented Congress or any body of nationalist opinion.

As to the promise of Dominion status, this was already so wearily familiar as to cut no ice. It had first been hinted at in 1917, in a similar period of British difficulty, and first definitely promised in 1929, when Lord Irwin, the then Viceroy, had made a positive declaration that this was the Government's intention. Since then, while nothing had come of it, various other statements had been made which had done much to destroy the soothing effect of this promise. Thus, less than a week after Lord Irwin's declaration, Lord Birkenhead, former Secretary of State for India, had said in the House of Lords: "No sane man could assign any approximate period for the date on which we could conceive India attaining Dominion status. No one had the right to tell the people of India that they were likely in any near period to attain to Dominion status." A year later Winston Churchill declared: "The British nation has no intention whatever of relinquishing effectual control of Indian life and progress. We have no intention of casting away that most truly bright and precious jewel in the Crown of the King, which more than all our other Dominions and Dependencies constitutes the glory and strength of the

British Empire." In 1931 Stanley Baldwin, speaking as Prime Minister, had put it even more strongly: "It is my considered judgment in all the changes and chances of this wide world today, that you have a good chance of keeping the whole of that sub-continent of India in the Empire for ever."

A promise repeatedly made, without being fulfilled, and referring always to a nebulous future, loses conviction. When it is also repeatedly denied by Ministers of the very Government that made it, its honesty of intention becomes suspect. It was certainly received with impatience and disbelief in India in 1939.

Five months later, with the war still in its early inactive stage and with our war aims still unstated, Congress by an enormous majority passed another resolution,¹ confirming their earlier attitude and claims, and refusing to take part in what clearly seemed to be just another imperialist war.

This was a strong line to take, dictated by weariness of promises which pointed ever further into the future, and of assurances that India was being always educated for a freedom which never materialised. If the British talk about a war for freedom really meant anything, then surely India was the perfect test case,² the touchstone of the genuineness of our claims? American opinion at this time had the same tone, and Axis propaganda made much of the obvious contradictions in our attitude.

Three months later came the collapse of France, following on the heels of the horrors and losses of Dunkirk, and Hitler jubilantly proclaimed the imminence of victory. India watched anxiously. Congress began to

¹ See Appendix. Congress Resolution, March 1940.

² "We must be prepared to reconsider the situation that arises out of past aggressions of our own as well as those of other people, and upon that India forms a test question."—Sir Stafford Cripps, House of Commons, October 26th, 1939.

hope that a compromise might be achieved by which India would be allowed her Constituent Assembly, and would rally the country to co-operation with Britain against the advancing and apparently invulnerable armies of Fascism. After a five-day session Congress, on July 7th, passed a resolution stating that they had "earnestly examined the whole situation once again in the light of the latest developments in world affairs."

This earnest examination had, they said, made them more than ever certain that the problem facing both Britain and India could be solved only by Indian independence, and they urged that Britain should acknowledge that independence without delay and allow a provisional National Government to be formed. Without such a step the organisation of India for war would be forced rather than voluntary, and would lack the necessary impetus: but if Britain would accede to these claims Congress would throw its whole weight behind India's co-operation in the war.

Faced with this combined offer and demand, the British Government then made its next move, which was received with disappointment in India as a deliberate check. The Viceroy's answer to the resolution was a refusal, partly on the grounds that communal differences in India made unity impossible, but chiefly on the score that, during the war, so great a constitutional change was not to be considered. The offer to expand the Viceroy's Council to contain more Indian members was repeated, with the suggestion that a War Advisory Council should be set up, on which the Native States and other national interests should be represented. To this was added a new phrasing of the familiar promise of future Dominion status: "They (the Government) hope that in this process new bonds of union and understanding will emerge, and thus pave the way towards the attainment by India of

that free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth which remains the proclaimed and accepted goal of the Imperial Crown and of the British Parliament."

This reply puzzled as well as disappointed India, since Indians found it difficult to understand why, if Mr. Churchill could have offered British Union with France at a moment of acute danger—the most drastic proposal of constitutional change in British history—the much less radical change-over to Indian control was such an impossibility.

Chilled by the implication, Congress rejected the Viceroy's minor offers, and within a few weeks the result of the British attitude was seen in the swing of Indian opinion towards Gandhi and pacifism. Reflecting this change, the All-India Congress Committee in September passed a further resolution, this time in favour of non-violent resistance to co-operation in the war. Nehru's more active policy lost some support, since a campaign of non-violence would inevitably be carried out under the leadership of Gandhi. Inevitably, too, the campaign was met by the British with repressive measures, and thousands of Congress supporters were thrown into jail. The situation which was soon to assume so fantastic a character was beginning to take shape.

In the summer of 1941, however, there occurred two important events which shook Indian resolution. The first was Hitler's invasion of the U.S.S.R., a development which considerably altered the complexion of the war, causing surprise and confusion of political opinion in many countries. There was no doubt, however, as to the side on which Indian sympathy lay. Ever since the Russian people had thrown off the old repression of Tsarist rule India had followed with special interest and sympathy the Soviet Government's struggle to emancipate a backward and poverty-stricken people, and from its

success had drawn encouragement and hope. The entry of Russia into the war had an immediate and perceptible effect on Indian feeling, creating a slightly more favourable attitude towards Britain: and the Viceroy, hoping, perhaps, that the moment was now propitious, fulfilled his earlier offer to enlarge his Council, which he did by five seats. Indians were now in a majority on the Council—a change which sounded better in Britain than in India, since none of the new members represented Congress or any nationalist views, and the Viceroy still retained his power to veto or ignore the Council's decisions.

This expansion of the Council evoked no enthusiasm, but the second historic event of that fateful summer had a very different effect. On August 12th, 1941, Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt signed the Atlantic Charter, declaring the "common principles in the national policies of our respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world." It was the third of the Charter's eight points which gave rise to renewed confidence and hope in India:—

"They respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them."

Three days after this inspiring declaration, and before Mr. Churchill had returned to England, Mr. Atlee, then Deputy Prime Minister, made a speech in which he emphasised the fact that coloured peoples as well as white were to share in the benefits of the Charter. "You will not find," he said, "in the declarations which have been made on behalf of the Government of this country on the war any suggestion that the freedom and social security for which we fight should be denied to any of the races of mankind."

In India this seemed like the dawn of hope at last. It

was felt that either the British Government had been misunderstood, due perhaps to the prejudices of old bitterness, or that the fast-changing character of the war had produced a real change of heart. A wave of friendly feeling swept the country, and Congress—more experienced in diplomacy but none the less highly hopeful—waited eagerly for the Government's next pronouncement.

When it came, however, it was a crushing blow. In the House of Commons on September 9th Mr. Churchill categorically refused to apply the principles of the Atlantic Charter to India. "At the Atlantic meeting," he said, "we have had in mind, primarily, the restoration of the sovereignty, and natural life of the States and nations of Europe . . . that is quite a separate problem from progressive evolution of self-governing institutions of the regions and peoples which owe allegiance to the British Crown." Mr. Atlee had, in a sense, been right. One could not "find" in the Atlantic Charter "any suggestion that the freedom and social security for which we fight should be denied to any of the races of mankind." But the suggestion, apparently, was hidden there just the same. "Self-government and natural life" were not for India.

The supreme moment had been lost, and the element of tragic absurdity threw a darkening shadow over our relations with India. It seemed, however, as though it might still be retrieved. Indian trades unions and student bodies continued to pass anti-Fascist resolutions and agitate for co-operation with Britain and Russia against the Axis. Indian opinion was divided roughly into two camps, between Gandhi and passive resistance on the one side, and Nehru on the other. Gandhi, leading the extreme nationalist or Sinn Fein (Ourselves Alone) elements, maintained that Britain was the existing oppressor and therefore the immediate opponent; and

that non-violent resistance was the best defence for the unarmed people of India, whether against the British or the Japanese. Nehru, focus of the modern, anti-Fascist and international Indian outlook, was firm for co-operation with the United Nations—if only Britain could be induced to grant India the freedom of peoples which was an avowed war aim, and which was the one incentive needed to inspire the Indian people to total co-operation in the war.

Nehru and other Congress leaders had by this time been kept for a number of months in jail. In October 1941 they were released, and two months later the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour and America entered the war. The Pacific had now become one of the principal arenas, and the war was moving steadily nearer to India. In December Congress met at Bardoli and passed a strong resolution in favour of armed resistance to the Axis as an ally of the United Nations, provided that India could mobilise under a National Government. Disagreeing with this resolution (since it abandoned the policy of non-violence) Gandhi passed out of leadership, leaving Nehru in control. To quote the *Times of India*, “The resolution reopens the door to agreement with the British Government, thereby giving a valuable lead which we hope will be reciprocated.”

This propitious development was followed, in February 1942, by the visit of Marshal Chiang Kai-shek to India, where he conferred with General Wavell and afterwards with Nehru, and made a simultaneous appeal both to Britain and India. To India he said that there was “no middle course” between the two camps of aggression and anti-aggression. To Britain he sent a serious and significant message, speaking as China’s leader:

“I sincerely hope and I confidently believe that our ally Great Britain, without waiting for any demand on

the part of the people of India, will as speedily as possible give them real political power, so that they may be in a position further to develop their material and spiritual strength and thus realise that their participation in the war is not merely an aid to the anti-aggression nations for the securing of victory, but also a turning-point in their struggle for India's freedom. From an objective point of view I am convinced that this would be the wisest policy, which will redound to the credit of the British Empire."

With the loss of Malaya and Burma still fresh in our minds, and with the fact acknowledged that the rapid Japanese conquest had been made possible chiefly by Malayan and Burmese indifference and even hostility to their British masters, Chiang Kai-shek's firm expression of Chinese opinion had a considerable effect not only in India, but in Britain and America.

It was in this propitious atmosphere that Sir Stafford Cripps left London for Delhi in April, carrying with him the British Government's new proposals for a settlement with India.

VII

THE CRIPPS MISSION

ALTHOUGH much of the course of the Cripps negotiations remains unpublished, and the reasons for their failure have become obscured by confusion and argument, the main features are clear.

Sir Stafford Cripps took with him to India for discussion with Congress leaders (for in spite of previous objections to Congress as being "unrepresentative" of India, it was to Congress that the Government sent its minister to negotiate) a draft of proposals for a "final settlement" of the Indian problem. These proposals outlined the course which the British Government was prepared to follow if, in their view, the outcome of the discussions warranted it.

The Government stated that they had formulated these proposals in pursuance of their decision to lay down "in clear and precise terms the steps which they propose shall be taken for the earliest possible realisation of self-government in India," and in fulfilment of their promises in regard to the future of India, about which so many anxieties had been expressed. The object of the British plan was stated to be the creation of a new Indian Union which should constitute a Dominion, as defined in the Balfour Declaration of 1926.

To achieve this, the British Government was prepared to make a declaration which would state that:—

(1) Immediately after the war an elected body should be set up, charged with the task of forming a new Constitution for India.

(2) The Indian States should participate in the framing of that Constitution, and could appoint repre-

sentatives to the elected body in the same proportion to their total population as the British Indian provinces.

(3) The British Government would accept and implement the Constitution framed by that body, subject to: (a) The right of any province of British India not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present position and subsequently to accede if it so desired; and (b) The signing of a negotiated treaty between the British Government and the constitution-making body, providing for "the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands", and the protection of racial and religious minorities.

It was also laid down that any non-acceding province of British India could, if it wished, agree with other non-acceding provinces on a separate constitution, these combined provinces being together accorded the same status as the proposed Indian Union.

It was further stated that the constitution-making body was to be set up by an Electoral College composed of the members of the lower houses of the Provincial Legislatures.

The above proposals dealt with the future of India as a Dominion, after the war. The document carried by Sir Stafford Cripps also included the main points of the Government's decisions concerning the present. They were:—

(1) That the Government would inevitably "bear the responsibility and retain control and direction of the defence of India as part of the world war effort."

(2) That the British Government itself would organise "the military, moral and material resources" of India.

(3) That this task was to be carried out with "the co-operation of the peoples of India."

(4) That the British Government "desire and invite" the "immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations."

The proposals were stated to be unalterable in fundamentals, and offered for acceptance or rejection as a whole.

The drawbacks of these proposals, on which such hopes had been set, were immediately made clear in the objections raised both by Congress and by the other Indian parties. In the first place, their provisions encouraged the setting up of separate "Ulsters", and perpetuated the feudal rule of the Princes' States. The objection regarding the States was a serious one, since it implied the probable retention of British armed forces in the Princes' territories to keep their subjects from revolting against their continued and often repressive feudal conditions. It was also observed that although the Princes were to have representation on the constitution-making body, according to the number of their subjects, the subjects themselves (numbering 80 millions) were to have no say in the choice of their representatives, nor in their own part in the proposed Indian Union. This clearly seemed to be striking a blow at democracy, and destroying any chance of democratic rule for these 80 million people.

The provision for a separate constitution for non-acceding provinces did not even satisfy the Moslem League's desire for a completely Moslem state of Pakistan. It failed, in fact, to provide for an Indian Union which at the same time should be a United India—the fundamental condition underlying all nationalist Indian hopes. Instead, it expressly provided opportunity for divisions, and left the British an excuse for remaining in India.

The biggest and most obvious drawback of all, however, was that apart from the opportunity for endless delay which acceptance of the "after the war" clause would entail, the Cripps proposals proved on examination not to have advanced, except in certain minor details, beyond the Government's declaration of August 1940. Now, as then, the promise was Dominion Status. Now, as then, it was confined to a future which might be many years away, and in which the British Government might be no longer in a position to redeem it. As Gandhi bitterly observed, it was a "post-dated cheque on a tottering bank", and Indian distrust of future promises given in time of need had been deeply sown by previous British policy.

However, in spite of these objections Congress took the view that negotiations must be allowed to proceed, since the war danger was so grave, and it was vitally necessary to meet effectively "the perils and dangers that confront India and envelop the world". But Congress also considered that it was no use prolonging any argument about future problems, since it was present action, and not promises, which would determine that future: therefore it was the transfer of adequate political power *in the present* on which agreement must be reached if India were to be effectively mobilised for war.

It cannot be over-emphasised that Indian opinion was in no sense pro-Japanese; it was completely, as always, anti-Fascist, and in sympathy with the cause of the United Nations; but it was also, and to a considerable extent, anti-British, and it was for the sake of Indian defence that Nehru and other Congress leaders strove in the negotiations to remove this anomaly.

If, they said, the whole nation was to be rallied to the defence of India, the Indians must be given something to fight for--namely, their own freedom. No promise of

future concessions had the power to inspire them: an adequate transfer of political power must be made immediately. On this basis alone, said Nehru, could they go to the people and call on them to throw their entire strength into the struggle.

In an attempt to approach agreement, Congress abandoned many details of their original demands. "For the first time in twenty-two years," said Nehru at Delhi after the breakdown of the discussion, "I swallowed a bitter pill when I said I was prepared somehow or other to reach agreement. I did want to throw all my sympathy and energy into the organisation of events in India. In my conception of the defence of India I wanted a hundred million Indians in the army. It was not a conception of just an army functioning but of every man and woman doing something—making it a people's war—and carrying on defence even where trained armies failed. The popular conception of resistance is no surrender at any cost. That is the conception China has given us, the conception seen in Russia, and that is the conception we want in India." The Congress leaders accordingly made it clear that they were prepared to leave the operational control of the war and the control of all the armed forces, British and Indian, with the British Commander-in-Chief; they were prepared to accept General Wavell as Defence Minister in the Indian Cabinet, and to follow a war strategy as dictated from Whitehall. But they insisted at the same time on an Indian Cabinet being politically responsible in India.

Unhappily there seems to have been a serious misunderstanding which lasted through most of the negotiations. Apparently Sir Stafford Cripps discussed a provisional national and popular government, an Indian National Government which would function as a Cabinet; and the Congress leaders assumed that power

would reside in this body, with the Viceroy's position analogous to that of the King of England in relation to the British Cabinet. The most favourable stage of the negotiations was reached on this assumption, which was suddenly proved towards the end of the talks to have been unfounded.

Without a complete account of the negotiations—impossible until a full transcript of the talks is published—it is useless to theorise as to exactly how this misunderstanding arose. The vital fact emerged, however, that whatever might be its intentions with regard to the future, the British Government refused absolutely to transfer any real measure of political power during the war. It was at this point that the Congress leaders realised that the new offer was, save in minor detail, no advance on the declaration of August, 1940; and since Sir Stafford Cripps now stressed the condition that it had to be accepted or rejected *as a whole*, there was no further basis for discussion.

Various minor concessions had certainly been offered by the Government, namely, that the Viceroy's Council should be again enlarged to take in more "representative Indians", and even that the Defence Minister should be an Indian, though with very small and circumscribed powers (chiefly the organisation of canteens). But the unpalatable fact remained that final authority was still to rest with the India Office and the Viceroy, and while the bait of a further enlargement of the Viceroy's Council was met with indifference, the paltry functions suggested for the Indian Defence Minister had, in Indian eyes, almost the air of an insult. It was later suggested in England that there would have been little use in offering power to an Indian National Government, since the differences between the various minorities would have prevented the formation of any such body; but as the

offer was never made there can be no certainty of the truth of this assertion. Certainly in the light of common sense it seems unlikely that even Mr. Jinnah would dare to incur the country's anger by sabotaging such an offer.

The failure of the Cripps negotiations, which at their origin had aroused such hopes, produced a proportionate bitterness. There were angry recriminations on both sides. In this country it was generally believed that the Indian leaders had been unable to agree among themselves and so had wantonly rejected an offer of independence, while in India the rumour spread that the whole mission had been nothing more or less than a propaganda stunt to satisfy public opinion in America. The propitious atmosphere which had existed at the outset of the Cripps mission was totally destroyed, and Congress, which had been almost unanimous in its support of Nehru and his programme of active participation in the war, began swinging back to Gandhi.

All hopes of coming to a practical agreement with the British Government collapsed, and on August 8th the All-India Congress Working Committee passed a final resolution.¹ This resolution, which prompted the British Government to such drastic action and so helped to pave the way to the present deadlock, emphasised once again the necessity for the immediate ending of British rule in India. It surveyed "with dismay" the deterioration of the Allied position on the various war fronts, and declared that the policy which had led to such disasters was based on a continuation of imperialist rule, and contradicted the official lip-service paid to a democratic or people's war against Fascism. "India in bondage continues to be a symbol of British Imperialism and the taint of that imperialism will affect the fortunes of all the United Nations."

¹ The full text of this Resolution will be found in the Appendix.

The resolution renewed the appeals of Congress for a declaration of independence:

"On the declaration of India's independence, a Provisional Government will be formed, and Free India will become the ally of the United Nations, sharing with them in the trials and tribulations of the joint enterprise and struggle for freedom. A Provisional Government can only be formed by the co-operation of the principal parties and groups in the country. It will thus be a composite government representative of all the important sections of people in India.

"Its primary functions must be to defend India and resist aggression with all the armed as well as the non-violent forces at its command, together with its Allied Powers . . . Freedom will enable India to resist aggression effectively with the people's united will and strength behind it."

The resolution went on to declare its belief that "the future peace and security and ordered progress of the world demand a world federation of free nations, as on no other basis can the problems of the modern world be solved. . . . In view of the war, however, a federation to begin with must inevitably be confined to the United Nations. Such a step, taken now, will have the most powerful effect of the war on the peoples in the Axis countries and on the peace to come."

The Committee stated its unwillingness in any way to embarrass the defence of China or Russia, whose freedom was dear to India, but urged that "inaction and submission to foreign administration at this stage is not only degrading to India and reducing her capacity to defend herself . . . but is no answer to that growing peril and no service to the peoples of the United Nations." It would again, it said, even at this last moment, renew its appeal to Britain and the United Nations.

In view, however, of the continued hostility shown by Britain to the idea of Indian freedom, it felt compelled to sanction "the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines"—a struggle which, when launched, "must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhi."

It was this last section of the resolution which was taken as the signal for drastic repressive action on the part of the Government—beginning with the arrests of Nehru, Azad, Gandhi and other Congress leaders. The civil disobedience campaign referred to had not been launched when the arrests took place, and Congress, in the debate leading up to the passing of the resolution, had shown every desire to reach a settlement and to negotiate. Nehru had stated, "The resolution is not a threat: it is an invitation and an explanation; it is an offer of co-operation." Gandhi's letter to Chiang Kai-shek in July, which has been subsequently published, had stated that he would "take no hasty action, and whatever action is taken will be governed by the consideration that it should not injure China or encourage Japanese aggression in China or India: I am straining every nerve to avoid a conflict with British authority."

Other pronouncements of Gandhi, however, consistent with his pacifist position but at no time supported by the main body of Congress behind Nehru and Azad, had by this time been used in world-wide publicity to blacken the whole character of Congress. Police had broken into the office of Gandhi's newspaper, *Harijan*, and had seized an article in which he outlined the familiar pacifist argument that, in the event of invasion, India would in practice be able to absorb the Japanese; and that if British hostility to a nationalist India continued, peaceful negotiations with the Japanese were an alternative to be considered.

This publicity prepared the way for the arrests; on the

passing of the Congress resolution not only Gandhi, but also Nehru and Azad, were thrown into prison. The Government had apparently set its face against any further negotiation, was rejecting the Congress appeal for a final attempt at settlement, and had decided that the defence of India could best be carried out by the British army in the face of the non-co-operation and even hostility of the people of India.

As soon as the arrests were known, they were followed by spontaneous outbursts of rioting in all parts of the country, including the Indian States. Though un-organised and violent, and deplored by Congress, these outbreaks were represented in England as being the organised campaign of non-violence which the Congress leaders had threatened, and the final humiliation of public flogging was imposed in various provinces. Since then, of course, the situation has deteriorated rapidly; such news as has filtered through from India speaks of the damage, already running into millions, done by the rioters to Government buildings, which is having a serious effect on war production. The veil of censorship is drawn more closely than before over a grotesque and tragic situation. Negotiations have been replaced by rioting on the one hand and flogging and shooting on the other, while among the people, deprived of their leaders and with difficulty being driven by force into a sullen inaction, hostility to Britain grows. Nehru is silenced and in prison, and the Japanese are watching their opportunity.

VIII

A COMMONSENSE SOLUTION

To find the cure for an illness one must first diagnose the disease. The gravity of the symptoms must be considered, since operation may be necessary.

The crisis in the Indian situation is serious, really serious. The Japanese, swollen with the conquest of Burma and Malaya, are threatening India. To what extent can the British forces resist them? With India lost, the United Nations would lose far more than India, and in our military strategy to prevent this loss we are faced with two alternatives—either fighting with a population of 400 million people and the resources and potential resources of their vast sub-continent on our side, or fighting on their soil with those 400 millions apathetically neutral or even hostile to us. Our decision between these two alternatives may turn the scale not only between our holding or losing India, but between the Allied Nations winning or losing the war. The weight of support now trembling in the balance is enormous: can it not somehow, still, be thrown in on our side?

The situation as it exists is fantastic. The very existence of Britain and the United Nations may eventually prove to depend on the fate of India. The cause for which the peoples of the United Nations are fighting and dying is the overthrow of oppression and the freedom of nations to choose their own form of government. India is wholeheartedly sympathetic to that cause, and has repeatedly offered to throw her whole weight into the struggle on our side, on the necessary condition that we extend her the freedom of which the United Nations are the symbol, and without which, as Nehru and her other leaders have

told us, it would be impossible to rouse the peoples of India to total war.

Yet the present (and we *must not* allow it to become the final) outcome of this straightforward possibility of co-operation is a paralysing stalemate. The Indian leaders have been imprisoned, the Indian people are angry and confused and expressing that anger and confusion in violence and rioting, while with the aid of whips and machine-guns the police and military are barely maintaining control. Meanwhile Japan waits expectantly on the outskirts of the struggle, gathering her strength and choosing the moment to strike.

Lifting aside the veils of censorship and propaganda we see plainly that the British Government has the choice of gaining a nation of 400 millions as an ally, or of trying to keep it in bondage for the time being and therefore hostile to our cause. Put bluntly, is it worth risking obliteration by the Axis for the hope of keeping British administrative control of Indian capital investment? And again, how can we hope to rouse the subject peoples of the world to the struggle for freedom when we are actively denying freedom to one-sixth of mankind?

Those who believe that at all costs the war against the Fascist aggressors must be won and the security of free nations established for ever, are at this moment asking what can be done *now*, even at the eleventh hour? What is the commonsense course? The situation has deteriorated almost to the lowest ebb of hope—but can it not still be saved?

Where the will exists, wisdom and perseverance will find a way. Commonsense insists that the situation *must* be retrieved; that we cannot afford to make enemies of 400 millions who are willing to be our friends; and that if we say we are fighting for the cause of freedom in very honesty we must make India free.

What then are the practical steps towards a common-sense solution? In the first place the Government must at once release the Congress leaders and reopen negotiations. This is absolutely essential. To those who say that by so doing the British Government would lose face, the answer is, which face do they prefer to lose? The Imperialist, *herrenvolk* face, which cannot endure to relax its authority over a subject people, or consent to free and mutual co-operation with a coloured race? Or the face which is turned towards freedom, and in whose honesty of expression we have asked the world to believe?

In the second place Britain must offer to invest real power in an Indian National Government. The operational control of the war and of the armed forces must obviously remain in the hands of a British Commander-in-Chief, and the higher strategy of defence must be decided in Whitehall, or wherever the military headquarters of the United Nations may be. This condition, as we have seen, has already been fully conceded by the Congress leaders.

There remains the question of the form which the Indian National Government should take, and how it can best be brought into existence. Discussions with Congress—by far the largest and most representative Indian body—could no doubt produce a working basis for the formation of such a Government. A variety of methods would be possible, but probably the most straightforward course would be for the Viceroy to send for either Azad (the President of Congress) or Nehru (the Secretary) and ask them to form a National Government, on the understanding that power would be transferred to it only for the duration of the war, that minority interests should not be prejudiced by participation in this government, and that at the end of hostilities an elected Constituent

Assembly should finally determine the Constitution of India. Congress has already declared that in the formation of such a provisional National Government, minority leaders and representatives of the Indian States would be asked to participate: it is therefore almost inconceivable that any minority leader, such as Mr. Jinnah of the Moslem League, would refuse to take part in a provisional National Government formed with a view to the independence and defence of India. Any minority leader who elected to pursue this suicidally obstructive course would very quickly find himself without a following. In the extremely unlikely case that a National Government, even after India's long and painful struggle for it, could not be formed for reasons of minority disagreement, then at least the burden of failure would rest on India, and not, as at present is disgracefully the case, preponderantly on ourselves.

A commonsense course such as we have just considered, so simple in outline and yet so far-reaching in its implications, would go to the very roots of the present malady and rally the whole of India to our side. In such circumstances the best talent and brains of India would be recruited to the Government, and the possible inexperience of the Indian leaders in their new office would be more than offset by the enthusiasm of all classes of Indians for making a success of the independence towards which they have struggled for so long.

Such a course would also convince the world, as nothing else now has the power to do, of the sincerity of our professed war aims and peace intentions, and would rouse such an enthusiasm of support, not only among our Chinese, American and Russian allies but among the Axis-enslaved nations of the world, that the tide would indeed turn against the forces of aggression and the way be opened at last for a democratic new order.

IX

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

If, after following this brief survey of the Indian crisis and the events, historical and recent, which have led up to it, the reader is able to agree on these three points:—

- (1) That it is vital to win the war;
- (2) That we cannot afford to have a hostile India, or an India coerced into obedience, when it is possible to have the Indian nation as our ally; and
- (3) That the only way to win India's full support for the United Nations is to release Congress leaders, re-open negotiations, and offer real power to a National Government *now*—

what, having so agreed, can he do about it?

Already a large body of opinion in the United Nations feels strongly that the time has come for India to be free, and that this liberation must be brought about if we are to win the war. There is reason to believe that American official pressure has been brought to bear on the Government, urging the application of the Atlantic Charter to India, and Washington correspondents emphasise a growing American hostility to our policy of repression. More explicitly, Dr. H. V. Evatt, Australian Commonwealth Minister for External Affairs, has expressed Australian opinion in the Commonwealth Parliament: "We sympathise with the aspirations of the Indian people to become one of the self-governing nations, and as such to take part in the defence of the Allied cause in Asia." Marshal Chiang Kai-shek's earnest appeal to Great Britain as an ally, to give "real political power" to the Indian people, was made not only as from the leader of the greatest national movement in the world, but

because, taking an objective view of the war, he was "convinced that this would be the wisest policy, which will redund to the credit of the British Empire." Looking to Russia, we find no possibility of doubt as to where her sympathies lie.

Only in Britain, where the "silent censorship" has created a sort of uneasy fool's paradise in regard to India, have people failed to realise fully the consequences which must follow the Government's policy. If enough people in Great Britain can be made to understand how truly disastrous is the situation in India, and how, if it is allowed to continue, it may even lose us the war and waste all the efforts and sacrifices that have so far been made, then the pressure of public opinion will eventually make itself felt, and the Government will be moved to a renewal of effort.

In wartime it is more than usually difficult for individuals to make themselves heard, but the force of public opinion is the essence of democracy, and there is no doubt that the public's neglect or failure to understand what is going on, and to express its opinion energetically and by every means, is to some extent responsible for our present calamities. We must not only open the eyes of those around us to the real dangers of the situation in India, but in the absence of general elections, must take every means to bring to the notice of Ministers and public men what the nation is thinking—either by direct letters and telegrams to Ministers, or writing to and lobbying Members of Parliament, or making deputations to Bishops and other religious leaders to urge them publicly to throw in the weight of their opinion, or taking part in public meetings and demonstrations, or sending letters to newspapers and the B.B.C. These are the only means of contact which the Government now has with the wishes of the people, and it would

probably welcome such a guide to what the nation wants. Certainly if the pressure of British public opinion were added to that of our Allies, it must induce the Government to reconsider its present policy of suppression of the Indian people.

Most wars are ultimately won by the side with the greatest man-power and the greatest economic resources: India's 400 millions—three-quarters of the population of the British Empire—and her incalculable potential resources, may well prove to be the deciding factors in the present struggle. But there is yet another factor—intangible, difficult to describe, yet very powerful—the energy which can be created by an ideal. Too few of us have had the opportunity to experience this. We have read about the Crusades, and about the continent-sweeping successes of Mahomet. In our own time we have heard tales of the unarmed Spanish peasants holding at bay the Fascist forces of Spain, Italy and Germany; of the incredible resistance of the badly equipped nationalist armies of China against the overwhelming mechanised forces of Japan; and of the Russians, in defence of their Socialist country, creating new standards of heroism in the most gigantic battles the world has ever known against the superior arms and technique of the Nazi machine. But too few of us have personally seen or experienced this, too few have actually seen this force at work, the spirit which gives one man the strength of ten, banishes exhaustion, smothers fear, and enables flesh and blood to achieve the impossible.

We of the Allied Nations can generate such a force by consecrating ourselves to the ideal of liberating mankind—not only from the tyranny of man, but from the equally destructive tyrannies of want and fear. The Atlantic Charter, unprecise though it may be, points us in this direction. But neither words nor charters nor propa-

ganda alone can awaken the spirit of man. Only sincere belief can kindle that flame, and so long as India remains an unwilling subject nation under our rule, so long do we remain unconsecrated, our declarations dwindle to propaganda, and the ideal dies which alone can release the force to make us invincible and worthy of victory.

APPENDIX

p. 41. *All India Congress Committee's Resolution,*
Oct. 10th., 1939.

"The British Government have declared India a bellicose country, promulgated Ordinances, passed the Government of India Amending Bill"—(which empowered the Viceroy to override the Constitution)—"and taken over far-reaching measures which affect the Indian people vitally, and circumscribe and limit the powers and activities of the provincial governments. This has been done without the consent of the Indian people, whose declared wishes in such matters have been deliberately ignored by the British Government. . . .

"The Congress has repeatedly declared its entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit. It has condemned the aggression in which they have repeatedly indulged and their sweeping away of well established principles and recognised standards of civilised behaviour. It has seen in Fascism and Nazism the intensification of the principle of Imperialism against which the Indian people have struggled for many years. The Working Committee must, therefore, unhesitatingly condemn the latest aggression of the Nazi Government in Germany against Poland, and sympathise with those who resist it.

"The Congress has further laid down that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them . . .

"Co-operation must be between equals by mutual

consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy. The people of India have, in the recent past, faced great risks and willingly made great sacrifices to secure their own freedom and establish a free, democratic state in India, and their sympathy is entirely on the side of democracy and freedom. But India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her, and such limited freedom as she possesses taken away from her . . .

"If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end Imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a constituent assembly without external interference, and must guide their own policy. A free, democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression, and for economic co-operation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy, utilising the world's knowledge and resources for the progress and advancement of humanity . . .

"The Working Committee, therefore, invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged . . .

"The Committee earnestly appeal to the Indian people to end all internal conflict and controversy and, in this grave hour of peril, to keep in readiness and hold together as a united nation, calm of purpose and determined to achieve the freedom of India within the larger freedom of the world."

p. 43. *Congress Resolution, March 1940.*

"The recent pronouncements, made on behalf of the British Government in regard to India, demonstrate that

Great Britain is carrying on the war fundamentally for imperialist ends and for the preservation and strengthening of her Empire, which is based on the exploitation of the people of India, as well as other Asiatic and African countries.

"Under these circumstances, it is clear that the Congress cannot in any way, directly or indirectly, be a party to the war, which means continuance and perpetuation of this exploitation.

"The Congress, therefore, strongly disapproves of Indian troops being made to fight for Great Britain, and of the drain from India of men and material for the purpose of war . . .

"The Congress hereby declares that nothing short of complete independence can be accepted by the people of India. Indian forces cannot exist within the orbit of Imperialism. . . . The people of India alone can properly shape their own constitution and determine their relations to other countries of the world, through a constituent assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage."

p. 56. *Full text of the resolution adopted by the Congress Working Committee on August 5th, 1942, and passed by the All Indian Congress Committee on August 8th:—*

"The All India Congress Committee has given the most careful consideration to the reference made to it by the Working Committee in their resolution of July 14th, and to subsequent events, including the developments in the war situation, the utterances of the responsible spokesmen of the British Government, and the comments and criticisms made of India abroad.

"The Committee approves and endorses that resolution, and is of opinion that events subsequent to it have given it further justification, and have made it

clear that an immediate ending of British rule in India is an urgent necessity both for the sake of India and the success of the cause of the United Nations.

"The continuation of that rule is degrading and enfeebling to India and is making her progressively less capable of defending herself and contributing to the cause of world freedom.

"The Committee has viewed with dismay the deterioration in the situation on the Russian and Chinese fronts, and conveys to the Russian and Chinese peoples its high appreciation of their heroism in the defence of their freedom.

"This increasing peril makes it incumbent on all those who strive for freedom and who sympathise with the victims of aggression, to examine the foundations of the policy so far pursued by the Allied Nations which have led to repeated and disastrous failures.

"It is not by adhering to such aims, policies and methods that failure can be converted to success, for past experience has shown the failure inherent in them.

"These policies have been based not on freedom so much as on the domination of subject and colonial countries and the continuation of the imperialist tradition and method.

"Possession of the Empire, instead of adding strength to the ruling Power, has become a burden and a curse.

"India, classic land of modern imperialism, has become the crux of the question, for by freedom in India will Britain and the United Nations be judged and the people of Asia and Africa be filled with hope and enthusiasm.

"The ending of British rule in this country is thus a vital and immediate issue on which depend the future of the war and the success of freedom and democracy.

"A free India will assure this success by throwing all

her great resources into the struggle for freedom and against the aggression of Nazism, Fascism and Imperialism.

"India in bondage continues to be a symbol of British Imperialism and the taint of that imperialism will affect the fortunes of all the United Nations.

"The peril of today, therefore, necessitates the independence of India and the ending of British domination.

"The All India Congress Committee therefore repeats with all emphasis its demands for the withdrawal of British power from India.

"On the declaration of India's independence, a Provisional Government will be formed, and free India will become the ally of the United Nations, sharing with them in the trials and tribulations of the joint enterprise and struggle for freedom.

"A Provisional Government can only be formed by the co-operation of the principal parties and groups in the country.

"It will thus be a composite Government representative of all the important sections of people in India.

"Its primary functions must be to defend India and resist aggression with all the armed, as well as the non-violent, forces at its command, together with its Allied Powers, and to promote the well-being and progress of workers in the fields and factories and elsewhere to whom essentially all power and authority must belong.

"The Provisional Government will evolve a scheme for a constituent Assembly, which will prepare a constitution for the Government of India acceptable to all sections of the people.

"This Constitution, according to the Congress view, should be a federal one with the largest measure of

autonomy for federating units, and with residuary powers vesting in these units.

"Future relations between India and the Allied Nations will be adjusted by representatives of all these free countries conferring together for their mutual advantage and for their co-operation in the common task of resisting aggression.

"Freedom will enable India to resist aggression effectively with the people's united will and strength behind it.

"Freedom for India must be a symbol of, and prelude to, the freedom of all other Asiatic nations under foreign domination.

"Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, the Dutch East Indies, Persia and Iraq must also attain their complete freedom.

"It must be clearly understood that such of these countries as are under Japanese control now must not subsequently be placed under the rule or control of any other Colonial Power.

"While the All India Congress Committee must primarily be concerned with the independence and defence of India in this hour of danger, the Committee is of opinion that the future peace and security and ordered progress of the world demand a world federation of free nations, as on no other basis can the problems of the modern world be solved.

"On the establishment of such a world federation disarmament would be practicable in all countries. National armies, navies and air forces would no longer be necessary, and a world federal defence force would keep world peace and prevent aggression.

"In view of the war, however, a federation to begin with must inevitably be confined to the United Nations.

"Such a step, taken now, will have the most powerful

effect of the war on the peoples in the Axis countries and on the peace to come.

"The Committee regretfully realises, however, that despite the tragic and overwhelming lesson of the war, and the perils that hang over the world, the Governments of few countries are yet prepared to take this inevitable step towards world federation.

"The reactions of the British Government and the misguided criticisms of the foreign press also make it clear that even the obvious demand for India's independence is resisted, though this has been made essentially to meet the present peril and enable India to defend herself and help China and Russia in their hour of need.

"The Committee is anxious not to embarrass in any way the defence of China or Russia, whose freedom is precious and must be preserved, or to jeopardise the defensive capacity of the United Nations.

"But the peril grows both to India and to these nations, and inaction and submission to foreign administration at this stage is not only degrading to India and reducing her capacity to defend herself and resist aggression, but is no answer to that growing peril and is no service to the peoples of the United Nations.

"The earnest appeal of the Working Committee to Great Britain and the United Nations has so far met with no response, and criticisms made in many foreign quarters show ignorance of India's and the world's needs, and sometimes even hostility to India's freedom, which is significant of the mentality of domination and the racial superiority which cannot be tolerated by a proud people conscious of their strength and of the justice of their cause.

"The All India Congress Committee would yet again, at this last moment, in the interests of world freedom,

renew this appeal to Britain and the United Nations.

"But the Committee feels that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against the imperialist and authoritarian government which dominates it and prevents it from functioning in its own interest and in the interests of humanity.

"The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction, for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale so that the country may utilise all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last twenty-two years of peaceful struggle.

"Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhi and the Committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken.

"The Committee appeals to the people of India to face the dangers and hardships that fall to their lot with courage and endurance and hold together under the leadership of Gandhi and carry out his instructions as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom.

"They must remember that non-violence is the basis of this movement.

"The time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people, and when no Congress Committee can function.

"When this happens every man and woman who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself within the four corners of the general instructions issued.

"Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide in urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place, and which

leads ultimately to the independence and deliverance of India.

"Lastly, while the All India Congress Committee has stated its own view of the future governance under a free India, it wishes to make it quite clear to all concerned that by embarking on a mass struggle it has no intention of gaining power for Congress.

"Power, when it comes, will belong to the whole people of India."

